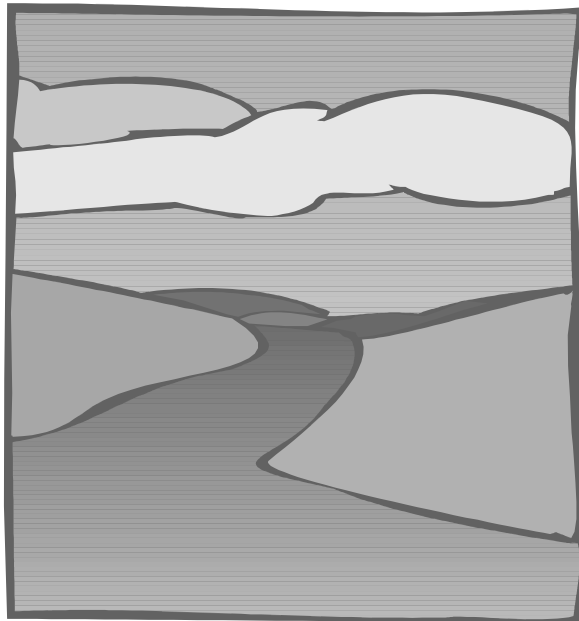


Sabbatical 2009



Kory Wilcoxson

Sabbatical –*noun* -any extended period of leave from one's customary work, esp. for rest, to acquire new skills or training, etc.

When I started at Community Christian Church in 2001, part of my employment contract allowed for a sabbatical. It reads, “From July 1, 2001, your date of original employment, every five years you will be granted a paid three-month sabbatical leave for the purposes of continuing education.” Therefore, this coming summer, from June 1 to Sept. 7, I will be taking my first sabbatical (only three years late!).

My plan for how to use that time is included in this packet. I hope it will give you a clear sense of how I will be fulfilling the requirement of continuing education while experiencing the rest and renewal for which a sabbatical is intended. I am focusing my sabbatical time around our church’s mission statement, which has three areas of focus:

- *Welcome* people into a loving and caring church family.
- *Equip* people with a Christ-centered faith that works in real life.
- *Share* Christ’s love for us through compassionate service to others.

Each month I will focus on a different aspect of the mission statement and use that as a guide for my study and reflection. I hope to emerge from the sabbatical with a renewed understanding of and commitment to our mission statement.

So what happens at CCC during those months? A lot, I hope! Michael will be brought on staff on a temporary full-time basis to cover the week-to-week responsibilities, and Nelson will be taking a more active role in pastoral care. The Elders and other elected leaders of the church will be responsible for keeping us moving forward during that time. The Sabbatical Planning Team is working on a plan for the church that would mirror some of the same areas on which I will be focusing.

Being the computer junkie that I am, I will be sure to keep in touch with all of you. I plan on maintaining a “sabbatical blog” during my time away, which will include stories, reflections, and other offerings. I’ll be sharing thoughts on my reading of scripture, reviews and commentary on books I read, and reflections on conferences I attend. While I won’t be checking work email or answering cell phone calls, I will be thinking of you and praying for you. While we’ll be out of sight from each other, you will never be out of mind for me.

While the idea of taking a sabbatical both scares and excites me, I believe it will be a time of growth for all of us. I’m eager to learn about myself during my time away, but I’m even more enthusiastic to hear what the church learns about itself. I expect that when we come together again in September, we will be different than when we parted company in June, thanks to God’s work in us.

Kory

Following in the Disciples of Christ's foundational belief in the "priesthood of all believers," effective church leadership results when a team acts in concert to accomplish God's work. A church committed to a pastoral sabbatical concept foresees benefits for both the pastor and the congregation. The goal of Kory's sabbatical, for him, is to permit him time for renewal of spirit and re-connection –with God, fellow pastors, and his inner being. For the church the goal is to discover more about who we are as a congregation and as individuals. This initiative will empower the laity of our church as we step forward to emulate what the early church did in the book of Acts, finding strengths and developing competencies we never suspected we possess.

Thus, for the mutual benefits to accrue, we need for the church leadership and the congregation all to support and participate in this opportunity for rejuvenation, renewal, and growth as we affirm the tenets of our mission statement-- welcoming, equipping, and sharing. Our coming together again as a church family upon Kory's return should find us stronger, amazed at our learning and growth, and ready to go where God is leading us with preparation, energy, passion, and excitement.

The Sabbatical Planning Team

Susan Bracken

Barry Lyerly

Beth McCormack

Kay Severns

Michael Swartzentruber

June

Focus – Welcoming people into a loving and caring church family

Event

June 25-26 - Granger Community Church Workshop – First and Lasting Impressions

<http://www.wiredchurches.com/s.nl/sc.7/.f>

This event focuses on helping churches creating eye-popping first impressions for visitors as well as ways to encourage them to return and become integrated into the church. Granger Community Church is on the cutting edge of innovative church practices.

Exercise

Visit 2-3 churches in the area and reflect on how they do “welcoming”

This will serve a dual purpose: (1) It will give me a chance to worship as a participant instead of a leader and (2) I will be able to observe how these churches creating an atmosphere of welcoming and hospitality. I will most likely continue this practice for the duration of my sabbatical.

Reading

Baab, Lynn. Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation’s Heart and Soul.

Stevens, Tim and Tony Morgan. Simply Strategic Growth: Attracting a Crowd to Your Church and Simply Strategic Stuff: Help for Leaders Drowning in the Details of Running a Church.

(Stevens and Morgan are on staff at Granger Community Church)

First Impressions : Creating WOW! Experiences

Next Session:

Thursday June 25, 2009 [9 a.m. - 4 p.m.]

Learn how to make great first impressions that last. Discover ways to:

- Build your team from the ground up, based on the experience you define.
- Cultivate volunteer “wow-makers.”
- Keep things like announcements, communion and the offering from distracting your guests or making them feel like outsiders.
- Determine the “rules” your church has even if you don’t know them yet.
- Experience hands-on training that will empower your volunteers.

Lasting Impressions

Next Sessions:

Friday, June 26, 2009 [9 a.m. - 4 p.m.]

Lasting Impressions picks up where First Impressions leaves off. As guests return to your church, how will you help them move from spectator to committed Christ-follower? Learn to create environments in your church that allow your guest to move organically toward Christ and others who are following Him. We'll discuss:

- Things you can - and can't - do to help others grow.
- The trouble with assimilation and how to fix it.
- Learning to think like an architect in relational spaces.
- Small groups: discipleship or friendship?
- Involving people sooner than later: the power of volunteering.
- How to develop experiences that encourage people to explore and grow in their personal journeys toward Christ.

Presenter: Mark Waltz, Pastor of Connections

Mark Waltz is a unifying force at Granger where he oversees adult relational connections, including groups, guest services and volunteer strategies. Mark’s book, *First Impressions: Creating Wow Experiences in Your Church*, addresses the issues of guest attendance growth and volunteer development, offering strategies for making high-impact first impressions. Mark’s ministry expertise is complemented by his marketplace experience, which includes retail management, employment and recruitment. By the way, he’s got a blog:

BecausePeopleMatter.com.

This workshop will be held on the campus of Granger Community Church. Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. The sessions will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lunch and breaks will be provided.

Book Descriptions

Baab, Lynn. Reaching Out in a Networked World: Expressing Your Congregation's Heart and Soul.

Product Description

A congregation communicates its heart and soul through words, photos, actions, programs, architecture, decor, the arts, and countless other aspects of congregational life. In *Reaching Out in a Networked World*, communications expert and pastor Lynne Baab examines technologies such as websites, blogs, online communities, and desktop publishing. She demonstrates how a congregation can evaluate these tools and appropriately use them to communicate its heart and soul, to convey its identity and values both within and outside the congregation.

Baab urges congregation leaders to reflect on the way they communicate. The recent explosion in communication technologies offers many new ways to present values and identity, but no one has much experience thinking about how best to use these tools. Baab seeks to help leaders use these new technologies with more precision, flair, and consistency. When congregations are intentional about communicating who they are and what they value, people in the wider community can get a clear and coherent picture of the congregation and its mission. Newcomers and visitors are more likely to see why faith commitments matter and why and how they might become involved in this congregation, while current members and leaders will greatly benefit from having a unified vision of the congregation's heart and soul.

Stevens, Tim and Tony Morgan. Simply Strategic Growth: Attracting a Crowd to Your Church and Simply Strategic Stuff: Help for Leaders Drowning in the Details of Running a Church.

Product Description for “Simply Stuff”

Here are 99 topics church leaders need to know! Some say it's the little things that matter the most, but the little details are often what pastors dread the most. Easy-to-understand and humorous, *Simply Strategic Stuff* equips pastors to perform the administrative details of pastoring with ease, and enthusiasm. Pastors are encouraged to consider basic principles that will help them develop systems and structures for releasing growth, enabling churches to reach their communities and the world for Jesus Christ!

July

Focus – Equipping people with a Christ-centered faith that works in real life

Event

July 29-Aug 2 - General Assembly, Indianapolis, IN

<http://www.disciples.org/GeneralAssembly/tabid/59/Default.aspx>

The purpose of the Assembly is to bring members of the denomination together for continuing education, denominational information and fellowship. The benefit for my attendance is that it keeps me connected with my colleagues and with the denomination. That in turn benefits the church because I bring back with me that information and those connections which better help me serve the church. If I am more informed, the congregation is more informed. In addition, there are a number of resource groups and workshops that I would attend relating to church ministry. These groups can be invaluable sources of information and new ideas that I would use in the church.

Exercise

Read through and blog about 1-2 Timothy

Timothy was one of Paul's closest companions and most faithful followers. Paul wrote these two letters to Timothy to give him practical advice about the ministry. Immersing myself in these letters will help me learn from Paul's teachings about leading a congregation and hopefully my reflections will provide insight for others.

Reading

Eswine, Zack. Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture.

Hybels, Bill. Axiom: Powerful Leadership Proverbs.

Liefeld, Walter. 1 and 2 Timothy: NIV Application Commentary.

2009 General Assembly Indianapolis, IN

...for the Healing of the Nations

Theme/Overview

Disciples Assembly planners approached the 2009 General Assembly with awareness of the newly stated Disciples identity:

"We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us."

This assembly is designed to help us embody that self-understanding.

Through our theme, "for the Healing of the Nations" (Rev. 22:1-5), we address our hope to participate in God's healing, and ultimate redemption of the world. In worship we focus on our journey back to God's created wholeness. In an Assembly-wide conversation we focus on our future together as "a movement for wholeness." Then, through our closing All-Assembly Festival and communion service we extend our witness. Inviting guests from the "fragmented world" -- in Indianapolis and beyond -- who seek companionship for their faith journey, we will make it clear that Christ invites all to the Table of Blessing and Hope.

Worship

General Assembly worship moves Disciples through the self-understanding of our created goodness (Gen. 2) to our need for repentance and forgiveness when we walk away from the goodness that bathes our creation (Gen. 3). Understanding anew our call to wholeness, we share in Jesus' pray that we may be one, "that the world may believe," (John 17). Refreshed by God's call on our lives, we consider our own baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as empowerment to live lives – to act in ways – worthy of our calling (Acts 2). On our final day together, a Sunday, we move into the Indianapolis area's houses of worship for reflection on the day when God's imagination for creation restores us to wholeness (Rev. 22).

Then, in celebration of God's care and call for all creation, we gather for a closing concert and communion service on Sunday afternoon, inviting the entire Indianapolis metropolitan area community – especially those who seek companionship for their faith journey. There we spread the Lord's Table one more time together and "welcome all... as God has welcomed us."

This year's worship experiences feature an all-Disciples line up of preachers to bring the Good News of God's redemptive love to the Disciples Assembly. They are:

- [Cynthia Hale](#), Sr. Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Atlanta, Ga.
- [Doug Skinner](#), Northway Christian Church, Dallas, Texas
- [Sharon E. Watkins](#), General Minister and President, Indianapolis, Ind.
- [Frank Thomas](#), Sr. Pastor, Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis, Tenn.

To read more about the General Assembly speakers and their biographies, visit:
www.disciples.org/ga

Worship also features the musical direction of accomplished actor and musician, Bill Thomas, one of the ministers of Church of the Valley Christian Church in Van Nuys, Ca. Joining him again is a worship band of Disciples musicians, with surprise appearances by gifted special musical artists.

Worshipful Work/Business

A Wednesday afternoon business session begins the official work of the Assembly in Indianapolis, with General Minister and President Sharon E. Watkins delivering the State of the Church Address as one of the first reports of the Assembly.

Ayanna Johnson, 1st Vice Moderator, opens the worshipful work of our business sessions, leading us in prayer and reflection to start each day. Each morning a different speaker will follow her reflection, and address what it means to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

Thursday morning, the speaker is Rick Lowery, First Testament scholar and interim dean at Lexington Theological Seminary. He will unpack the pair of scriptures upon which our theme is based. (Gen. 2:4bff and Rev. 22:1-5)

Friday morning, plans are being finalized to identify a speaker who addresses the community, and how we might find wholeness in ways that make our neighborhoods and communities healthier and more sustainable.

Saturday morning brings Jose Morales, to the podium. Morales, a Chicago-area pastor and young adult who came to Disciples from a Pentecostal background, will remind Disciples that the early passion of the Disciples revival movement still burns in our hearts ready to burst into revival flame again.

At the close of each business session, Moderator Newell Williams, noted Disciples historian and President of Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas, provides a brief history presentation to the gathering, in recognition of the 200th Anniversary of one of the Disciples founding documents, The Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell.

Book Descriptions

Eswine, Zack. Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons that Connect with Our Culture.

Product Description

Zack Eswine starts this unique pastoral resource with a captivating question: Could I now reach who I once was? Challenging the idea that today's preachers must do away with biblical or expository preaching if they are to reach non-Christian people, Eswine offers a way of preaching that embraces biblical exposition in missional terms. Recognizing all of the different cultural situations in which the gospel must be preached, he gives preachers practical advice on preaching in a global context while remaining faithful to the Bible. Pastors, seminarians, and church and ministry leaders who speak in various contexts will welcome this fresh, thoughtful examination of bringing the Word to today's multi-everything, post-everything world.

Hybels, Bill. Axiom: Powerful Leadership Proverbs.

Product Description

Winning leaders have winning points of view—succinct, practical, portable leadership proverbs that help them arbitrate decisions and rouse troops to action. In *Axiom: The Language of Leadership*, Bill Hybels reveals eighty God-given, from-the-gut truths that continue to raise his game and his vision, thirty-plus years into his local-church leadership experience.

Liefeld, Walter. 1 and 2 Timothy: NIV Application Commentary.

Product Description

This volume of the NIV Application Commentary Series, helps readers learn how the message of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus can have the same powerful impact today that they did when they were first written. Walter Liefeld reveals the context and meanings of Paul's letters to two leaders in the early Christian church. He explores the present-day implications of these epistles and helps the reader to accurately apply the principles they contain to contemporary issues.

August

*Focus – Sharing God’s love with us through compassionate service to others
(my “outreach” will be “inreach” which will prepare me for more outreach)*

Event and Exercise

August 16-21 - Cedarly Clergy Retreat Center – Delafield, WI

<http://www.pastorsretreatnetwork.org/index.asp>

Estimated cost – travel costs only

Cedarly is a part of the Pastors’ Retreat Network, a collection of retreat centers around the country that offer full-time clergy a place of rest and renewal at no charge. The purpose of the retreat will be to reconnect with God as I rest and prepare to end my sabbatical. I will use daily prayer, reading and exercise to help me rejuvenate my call to serve God. I will also go on a “media fast” (except for a cell phone call to my family once a day) to help clear my mind and unclutter my soul.

Reading

Hybels, Bill. Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire that Ignites Personal Vision.

Rhodes, Tricia McCary. Holy Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have.

Cedarly Clergy Retreat Center

ABOUT OUR RETREATS

*Sermon preparation ... counseling ... administrative matters ... teaching ...
stewardship drives ... personnel issues ... financial challenges ...
denominational affairs ... recruitment ... personal growth ... family matters*

A pastor's daily responsibilities are so demanding and so important.

But one thing is more important still—maintaining a right relationship with God.

Our five-day retreats are designed to help you do just that.

The experience will profoundly affect your life and ministry—by changing your heart and helping you regain your perspective.

Imagine the renewal and refreshment you will gain as you:

- Rest, without having to keep an eye on the clock
- Spend time in prayer and Scripture reading
- Take a walk and let God speak to you
- Enjoy a meal with your hosts and fellow retreat guests
- Read a good book
- Nap, talk, play, meditate, or simply enjoy the view
- Contemplate, journal or discuss the day's experiences
- Enjoy a "date" with your spouse
- Grab a new friend and explore the community

Our retreats enable you to enjoy relaxation, solitude and contemplation. But we also appreciate God's creativity and humor. Laughter abounds and often serves as the release necessary for a deeper experience with God and others.

Step away from the demands of your calling and step into a special place where you can more clearly feel God's presence and respond to His call.

Book Descriptions

Hybels, Bill. Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire that Ignites Personal Vision.

Product Description

What is the one aspect of this broken world that, when you see it, touch it, get near it, you just can't stand? Very likely, that firestorm of frustration reflects your holy discontent, a reality so troubling that you are thrust off the couch and into the game. It's during these defining times when your eyes open to the needs surrounding you and your heart hungers to respond that you hear God say, "I feel the same way about this problem. Now, let's go solve it together!"

Bill Hybels invites you to consider the dramatic impact your life will have when you allow your holy discontent to fuel instead of frustrate you. Using examples from the Bible, his own life, and the experiences of others, Hybels shows how you can find and feed your personal area of holy discontent, fight for it when things get risky, and follow it when it takes a mid-course turn. As you live from the energy of your holy discontent, you'll fulfill your role in setting what is wrong in this world right!

Rhodes, Tricia McCary. Holy Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have.

Product Description

Life is often chaotic. And no matter how hard you try to find space, to slow down, the chaos always seems to win.

Tricia Rhodes's life is chaotic too. And it became even more so during an eight-month period when her son and daughter-in-law and two grandchildren moved in. Gone was her time for morning prayer, gone was any quiet at all with a house full of people.

But God broke in. And Tricia learned to see him and communicate with him in whole new ways--not on a spiritual retreat, but right in the midst of the chaos of life. She offers us here a fresh view of connecting to God, one that focuses on quality time and frees us from the rigidity of a devotional life that may feel stifled, grow stagnant or bring about guilt when we can't keep up.

These pages will help awaken your heart to the reality of God's presence in your life--just as it is--providing new ways to pray, to listen to God, to view others the way God sees them, to be guided by God. "Making the Chaos Sacred" sections at the end of each chapter and suggestions for prayer experiments give practical suggestions for connecting with God and noticing his work throughout each day.

God is not afraid of chaos. If a chaotic life has you running, let Tricia's words offered here help you run to God in the midst of it and discover the ways he can turn even chaos into something sacred.

Ongoing activities during sabbatical

- Sabbatical Blog – running commentary/reflection on sabbatical experiences
- Questionnaire to fellow pastors at the beginning of each month about how their church does each of the three foci; answers will be shared anonymously on the blog and compiled as part of the final product

Final product will include:

- Blog entries and reflections from the three months
- Reflections and commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy
- Reports from Granger conference and General Assembly with a special emphasis on observations that will be beneficial to CCC
- Text of sermons heard (if possible)
- Results of questionnaires
- Bibliography